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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

THE FIRST OF OCTOBER IN GERMANY.

THE approach of the first of October and the time when the law expires which has prevented all open discussion or writing on Socialistic subjects since 1878 is causing some interesting discussion in Germany. Socialists begin to realize that they have a definite place in the politics of the empire, and that with the expiration of the law they will be able to proceed on a definite principle, publicly, in the Reichstag and among the people, with journalistic organs to express their views, and a strong party behind them.

The events since 1878 have been a history that was predicted on all sides—a steady growth under the oppression; a steady increase of membership when the penalty for belonging to such a sect was exile. Prince Bismarck, in his contest with the Ultramontane party, had joined himself with the Liberals and the laboring classes in the years preceding 1878. He had encouraged the Social Democracy in many ways, and been their champion as far as his service to the Hohenzollerns would allow. He had even gained his idea of suffrage from Lassalle, it is said. Under this patronage, and with the general advance in ideas, the small sect grew to such magnitude that the Chancellor saw the necessity of checking its growing influence. And it was in the midst of this that Germany was startled by the two attempts on the life of the old Emperor in the spring of 1878. A cry at once arose from all quarters against the Socialists. It was in vain that Herr Bebel, the leader of the Social Democracy, stated at once that neither he nor his party had anything in common with Hödel or Nobiling. The almost successful attempts at regicide had been attributed to the Socialists, and the feeling against the party could not be changed. The chance was too good a one for Bismarck to miss, and almost immediately a bill was proposed in the Reichstag for the suppression of the Socialist movement.

There were at the time 60,000 Socialists in Berlin, and about half a million in the empire. Their principles were being spread abroad by upwards of thirty-five periodicals and a large number of organizations; and in the Reichstag six members, with Herr Bebel at their head, called themselves the representatives of the party.

The first draft of the bill called forth not only the censure of the Liberals in Germany, but that of all the leading journals in England, France, and the United States. It proposed to suppress all writing, reading, or lecturing on Socialist matters in the empire, and left the decision as to what "Socialist matters" were to the local authorities. The Liberals at once saw that much of their own writing might be suppressed under the act, and they separated from the Chancellor.

At the third reading, however, a somewhat modified, but still a stringent, law was passed on the 21st of October, to run three years, and on the next day the president of police in Berlin broke up four prominent organizations, and suppressed thirty-five periodicals and irregularly-issued pamphlets. One of these, the *Freie Presse*, appeared again the next day under the name of the *Tagespost*, but never reached a second number.

The same vigorous treatment took place throughout the empire, and Socialism for the time was under cover, and "must now propagate itself, as slanders do, in whispers; and, as usual, whispers will circulate more rapidly than any paper." The history of the last twelve years has shown that this was a prophecy. The party was

for the moment crushed. All those who had been of it for other reasons than a deep belief in the doctrines of Socialism fell away like leaves from the trees in autumn; but the small nucleus grew stronger under oppression. The seats in the Reichstag remained about the same; and time passed till May 31, 1881. Then came a renewal under the same conditions, and the same thing was repeated in 1884 and 1887.

At the opening of the session last October the government brought forward another bill to renew the old one as before. Again came the attempt to strike out the clause limiting it to a term of years. But the *Kartel* party had something more to contend with than they had had before.

During these years since 1881 the Social Democrats had grown from something under half a million to over a million; the six members in the Reichstag had increased to eleven; not being able to publish pamphlets within the empire, publishing houses had been established in Zurich and Geneva and the papers circulated through Germany in a way that has been and still is astounding for its rapidity and efficacy. In fact, the few discoveries that have been made go far to show that a regular system for distributing pamphlets has been organized, which neither the local authorities nor the government have been able to bring to the light. So that with an increased standing and confidence, which these facts substantiate, the little party opened the session with a renewed opposition that succeeded eventually in carrying its point.

The discussion continued through the short session, and with the division of the parties on the question of the permanency of the law the Socialists found frequent opportunity to gain the ear of the Chamber and to push forward their objections to any such bill at all. Finally, at the third reading the bill was lost, and in the last days of February the Socialists knew that on the first day of October they were going back to the original *status* of 1878, but with a party larger, stronger, and more systematized than they had supposed possible then. Preparations are now being made for the coming day, and the enormous meetings that have been held during the summer—one rising to the number of 7,000—have in the last month grown too strong for the authorities to check. The leaders have been laying down platforms to hold the party together in a consistent whole, and these comprise the principles as stated twelve years ago—public education, regulation of the hours of labor, self-government, absolute freedom of the press, and the adjustment of the relations of labor and capital.

Thus under the leadership of Bebel and Liebknecht, and in spite of some dissensions, they stand over a million strong, with thirty-six members in the Reichstag, and a better organization than any of the other parties.

In the light of these events the policy of the young Emperor William toward Socialism is one of the most remarkable of his many remarkable steps. He has distinctly recognized the party; he has even invited one of them to drink beer with him at his castle; and his speeches in regard to the movement have led him into a course from which there is no turning back. This, added to their own activity, has made the Socialists to-day a recognized party in German politics, with a definite policy before them. On the first of October—or the seventh, to be more exact—meetings are to be held in different districts to build up the party more strongly, and arrangements seem to have been already made for the issue of party organs. The freedom will not be such as it is in America, but for the Germany of the last decade it is a great step toward absolute freedom of speech.

The questions that will soon come before the country are: How far is this to be allowed to go? and, Will the Socialist party run itself out, simply because of its new power to do whatever it sees fit to do, or will it grow stronger and gain an influential place in the Reichstag?—questions too difficult for any one to answer at present. The party has increased while under the vigorous law, not only in membership, but in moral strength. In these ten years labor troubles and the milder forms of Socialism have gained strength in Europe and America, until now half the writing in the more serious periodicals—whether daily, weekly, or monthly—is in connection with these subjects. These are the paramount questions of the last decade of the nineteenth century; and, in spite of what may be said to the contrary, they are gaining strength in the minds of the people at large.

In the midst of this the Emperor of the most "paternal" government in Europe—if we except Russia—is taking this huge, unformed subject into his own hands. He has ended the "blood-and-iron" rule; he has said again and again that he "will make the man great who will aid him in his endeavor to find the just course and keep to it, and will crush him who opposes him"; and his government has found it wise to take off what restriction has been in the past put upon the discussion of the subject. There can be no doubt of the young Emperor's earnestness; and yet one of the greatest principles of the Social Democracy in Germany to-day is *self-government*. That is, a monarchy of the old style goes hand in hand with a party working for government by the people!

It is a peculiar situation, that must have some sort of settlement before many years have gone—that has no exit behind. Is it an attempt on the part of the imperial government to get control of the whole organization in order to regulate the movement by-and-by by seeming to favor it now? or is it only to delay matters until a European crisis is tided over? Time must answer.

J. H. SEARS.

II.

POLICE OUTRAGES IN NEW YORK.

THE police force of the city of New York has gained an enviable reputation for bravery, and when its members are called upon to act in great emergencies, they have never failed to justify this reputation. At times there occur also individual proofs of devotion to duty in moments of great peril. Perhaps it is all the more on this account that the exhibitions of cowardice and brutality which are too frequently made by individual members of the force shock the community so severely. Within the past six months several cases of extreme brutality and despicable cowardice have been brought to public attention, and in each instance the policeman has suffered no greater punishment than a trial on charges before the Police Board.

Every one of these cases was a most heinous exhibition of cowardice, because the policeman in each instance relied upon his uniform, his shield, his club, and his personal influence with his superiors to protect him from the consequences of his brutality and cowardice. When an officer in uniform relies upon his badges of authority so that he feels safe in beating citizens or in wounding them with insulting language and brutal actions, such an officer is not only a coward, but is unworthy to serve with a body of men who are accounted brave. A few cases illustrative of this unworthy conduct may be cited.

A policeman in one of the uptown precincts was approached some weeks ago by a young woman who besought him to repair a great injury which he had done her. She came to him, not seeking a policeman to protect her, but a man to set right a wrong he had committed. He seized her violently and even used his club upon her arm, and then dragged her to a station-house and complained of her as one who had been guilty of disorderly conduct. The court discharged the woman, and charges were preferred against the policeman. A brief hearing was had, and that seems to have been the end of the case. Yet the honor of every citizen in this community was involved in these charges, and the Board of Police Commissioners should have left no stone unturned that they might discover whether it were possible that a woman pleading with a man to save her honor was liable to receive as a reply blows from a policeman's club and arrest and imprisonment on a charge of disorderly conduct.

A policeman, spying two men in the early evening who were walking one of the streets and carrying a bundle between them, stopped them and seized the bundle, and when one of the men protested against the insolence of the officer's manner, the policeman arrested both of them. They were committed to a cell for the night, dragged before a police court in the morning, and, after a brief examination and investigation, were shown beyond question to be honest men. They were discharged, and the officer was reprimanded by the court. These men were most cruelly outraged, and yet the officer who had done this has not even been called to account by the Police Board.